

be seen therefore that the difference in size of the two lots of eggs of *A. insignis* is no greater than the normal range of *A. cinerea* and therefore the size difference is not, in itself, a valid reason for rejecting the Sikkim eggs.

No other large heron is known to breed in Sikkim. Sálím Ali (1962) lists only one pos-

sibility, *Ardea goliath*, which may occur as a vagrant, but is not recorded as breeding anywhere within the Indian sub-continent. Therefore, if the Sikkim eggs of Baker's are *not* the eggs of *Ardea insignis* they are the eggs of some other species of heron hitherto unrecorded from Sikkim.

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CROMWELL ROAD,
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8. PEACOCKS AND COBRA

A common belief is that peacocks and snakes are mortal enemies. How far the peafowl is dangerous to large snakes may be a moot point but instances of sighting of snakes and peafowl engaged in mock fights are not uncommon.

One evening sitting behind a bush at the Forest Plantation of *Acacia arabica* near our College, I and some of my friends watched a flock of peafowl drinking water from a puddle on the fringe of the forest. Abruptly one peacock looked up at a nearby tree and started moving watchfully towards the tree. We soon saw a large cobra descending from the tree.

As soon as the cobra landed on the broken black soil two peacocks 'escorted' it on either

side.

The snake made its way passively but the peacocks occasionally pecked at the cobra gently and to this the reptile responded by raising its hood. The peacocks were wary, and whenever the cobra raised its hood they stood alert with raised hackles. As the cobra started gliding, the peacocks pecked at it and always the cobra reacted. The birds did not attempt to kill the snake, they just teased it.

This behaviour continued nearly for a hundred feet but nearing a thorny bush the snake vanished into a hole and the peacocks returned to their harems.

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January 30, 1975.

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